

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SANAA 01026 01 OF 02 301844Z

46

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /060 W

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P R 301455Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5425

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANAA 1026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINTN MILI

SUBJECT: FURTHER MILITARY CHANGES

REFS: SANAA 996.

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN BOLD MOVE PRESIDENT HAMDY PROCEEDED LAST NIGHT (APRIL 29) TO STRIP LT. COL. ABU SHUWARIB OF HIS MILITARY POSITIONS LEAVING HIM ONLY HIS POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITIES. WITH THIS

ACTION HAMDY NOW HAS COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE YEMENI ARMED FORCES AND HAS ELIMINATED POTENTIAL THREAT TO HIS REGIME FROM LEFTIST SYMPATHIZING ELEMENTS IN ARMY. IN ADDITION HE HAS ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED CAPABILITY OF MEDDLESOME SHAIKHS TO INTERFERE IN RUNNING OF THE ARMED FORCES. NEXT MOVE IS UP TO SHAIKH AL-AHMAR, WHO AT LAST MINUTE OPPOSED EARLIER HAMDY DECISION TO REMOVE ABU LUHUMS. ACCORDING TO MINISTER OF STATE SAID HAMDY ALSO PLANS REMOVE DIRHAM ABU

LUHUM AS TAIZ MILITARY COMMANDER BUT WISHES TO AVOID OPEN CONFRONTATION

WITH AL-AHMAR AND HIS SHAIKHLI SUPPORTERS, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. IN

ADDITION HAMDY WANTS USG TO UNDERSTAND FULLY HIS CURRENT MOVES AS  
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PAGE 02 SANAA 01026 01 OF 02 301844Z

EFFORT TO STABILIZE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS YEMEN'S BEST DEFENSE AGAINST LEFTISTS. SAID ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE SAUDIS WOULD APPRECIATE THAT LATEST MOVES ARE IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS AND WILL NOT SUPPORT AL-AHMAR, SHOULD LATTER FOOLISHLY DECIDE TO MOVE AGAINST AL-HAMDI. I BELIEVE AL-AHMAR CAN CERTAINLY DAMAGE YEMEN'S FRAGILE INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FABRIC SHOULD HE DECIDE TO WITHDRAW IN OPPOSITION TO HIS NORTHERN TRIBAL REGION BUT HAMDI AND THE ARMY ARE NOW IN A STRONGER MILITARY POSITION AND COULD DOUBTLESS STAND UP TO NORTHERN TRIBAL UNREST. I ASSURED SAID OF USG DESIRE TO CLOSE US-YEMEN RELATIONS AND RECOMMENDED THAT YARG CONSIDER DESPATCH OF HIGH-RANKING YEMENI TO RIYADH TO BRIEF SAUDIS FULLY ON BACKGROUND OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY

1. SANAA RADIO READ LAST NIGHT (APRIL 29) ON ITS REGULAR NINE-THIRTY NEWSCAST BRIEF TESTS OF TWO DECREES ANNOUNCING THAT HAMDI HAS APPOINTED A NEW COMMANDER (MAJ. ALI SALAH) TO HEAD THE MAJD BRIGADE AND HAD ALSO APPOINTED LT. COL. AHMAD GHASHMI AS DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN ADDITION TO HIS POSITION AS CHIEF OF STAFF. WITH THIS TERSE ANNOUNCEMENT HAMDI STRIPS LT. COL. MUHAHID ABU SHUWARIB, NOW ON A TOUR OF COMMUNIST CHINA, OF HIS COMMAND OF THE MAJD BRIGADE AS WELL AS OF HIS POSITION AS DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE YEMENI ARMED FORCES. COMING ON THE HEELS OF THE ABU LUHUM REMOVAL (SEE REFTEL). HAMDI HAS THEREBY ELIMINATED THE LAST KNOWN POSSIBLE THREAT TO HIS AUTHORITY FROM WITHIN THE YEMENI ARMED FORCES, EVEN THOUGH ABU SHUWARIB REMAINS A MEMBER OF THE COMMAND COUNCIL AND ALSO GOVERNOR OF HIS HOME PROVINCE OF HAJJA. IN ADDITION, HAMDI HAS REMOVED THE LAST PROMINENT LEFTIST SYMPATHIZING HIGH-RANKING OFFICER WITHIN THE YEMENI ARMED FORCES AS WELL AS THE LAST IMPORTANT OFFICER WITH CONNECTIONS TO POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME TRIBAL SHAIKHS (ABU SHUWARIB WHILE NOT NECESSAOSLY A LEFTIST WAS NOTED FOR HIS "PLAYING AROUND" WITH THAT GROUP AND IS A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF SHAIKH ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR AND AN IMPORTANT TRIBAL LEADER IN HIS OWN RIGHT).

2. LAST EVENING (APRIL 19) MINISTER OF STATE AHMAD ABDULLAH SAID CAME BY AT HIS URGENT REQUEST TO INFORM ME ON A STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, AND BEFORE THE ABOVE MENTIONED NEWSCAST, THAT THE MOVES DESCRIBED ABOVE WERE IMMINENT, BUT WITH NO FIRM DATES GIVEN. (SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SANAA 01026 01 OF 02 301844Z

ALSO TOLD ME THAT DIRHAM QGU LUHUM, TAIZ MILITARY COMMANDER, WAS TO BE REMOVED BUT HIS REPLACEMENT WAS NOT NAMED IN LAST NIGHT'S NEWSCAST. CHARACTERISTICALLY HAMDI MAY WELL BE TAKING CAUTIOUS STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH.) SAID CONTINUED THAT WHILE HE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO GIVE ME THIS SPECIFIC INFORMATION, HAMDI HAD EXPRESSLY ASKED SAID TO KEEP ME FULLY INFORMED ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS BECAUSE "HAMDI WANTS TO BE CERTAIN THAT THE US IS TOTALLY AWARE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YEMEN."

SAID ADDED THAT HAMDI WANTS THE USG TO UNDERSTAND THAT THESE MOVES DO NOT SIGNIFY THAT YEMEN IS ENTERING A PERIOD OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY BUT RATHER THAT YEMEN IS ATTEMPTING TO BUILD A STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF PURSUING A MODERATE POLICY, WHICH INTER ALIA ENVISAGES CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE USG. SAID STATED THAT HAMDI WISHES ALSO TO REMOVE POSSIBLE THREATS TO THIS POLICY FROM BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT IN YEMEN AS HAMDI IS CONVINCED THAT THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO ASSURE STABILITY AND PROGRESS FOR THE COUNTRY.

3. SAID SAID THAT WITH THE PLANNED CHANGES IN THE ARMY THE THREAT FROM THE LEFT WILL HAVE BEEN NEUTRALIZED. (IN THIS REGARD HE MENTIONED THAT RECENT REPORTS OF COLLUSION BETWEEN THE ABU LUHUMS AND THE ADENI REGIME FINALLY FORCED HAMDI TO MOVE AGAINST THEM.) THE QUESTION NOW REMAINING TO BE ANSWERED IS THE REACTION OF SHAIKH AL-AHMAR AND WHETHER HE WILL VIEW THE REMOVAL OF THESE LEFTIST LEANING SHAIKHS FROM THE MILITARY AS A CHALLENGE TO HIM AND THE SHAIKHLI SYSTEM RATHER THAN THE ELIMINATION OF THE LEFTIST THREAT WHICH IT WAS.

AT THE PRESENT TIME AL-AHMAR IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT HAMDI'S ACTIONS AND

FACT TRIED AT THE LAST MINUTE TO GET HAMDI TO RESCIND THE ORDER FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE ABU LUHUMS. HAMDI, HOWEVER, WAS NOT TO BE DETERRED.

SAID CONTINUED THAT HAMDI HAD NO DESIRE TO CONFRONT AL-AHMAR OR HIS SHAIKHLI SUPPORTERS AND SO THE NEXT MOVE IS UP TO AL-AHMAR. SAID OPINED THAT SHOULD AL-AHMAR FOOLISHLY TRY TO ACT AGAINST HARDI HE WOULD LOSE, EVEN IF THE SAUDIS SUPPORT HIM. HAMDI HOPED THAT THE SAUDIS WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT "WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YEMEN IS IN THEIR LONG-TERM INTERESTS AND, THEREFORE, THAT THE SAUDIS SHOULD NOT INTERFERE BY ATTEMPTING TO BACK AL-AHMAR." SAID HOPED THAT RATHER THE SAUDIS WOULD ADVISE AHMAR TO WORK CLOSELY WITH HAMDI IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE LEFT FROM YEMEN AND ASSURE STABILITY AND ECONOMIC

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 SANAA 01026 02 OF 02 301846Z

46

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FM AMEMBASSY SANAA  
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COMIDEASTFOR  
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANAA 1026

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI  
SUBJECT: FURTHER MILITARY CHANGES

REFS: SANAA 996.

DEVELOPMENT BASED ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MODERATES AND PROGRESSIVE

CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS. SAID CONCLUDED BY EMPHASIZING AGAIN HAMDI'S  
DESIRE FOR CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND YEMEN.

4. I THANKED SAID FOR KEEPING ME INFORMED. I ASSURED HIM THAT  
THE US GOVERNMENT RECIPROCATES PRESIDENT HAMDI'S DESIRE FOR CLOSE  
BILATERAL RELATIONS AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THESE RELATIONS  
WOULD IMPROVE EVEN FURTHER IN THE FUTURE. I TOLD SAID THAT THE US  
BELIEVES IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YEMEN TO ESTABLISH INTERNAL POLITICAL  
STABILITY BASED ON COOPERATION AMONG THE VARIOUS MODERATE ELEMENTS OF  
THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO ASSURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHICH IN TURN  
WOULD  
BE THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST LEFTIST INROADS. I ALSO SUGGESTED  
THAT YARG MIGHT CONSIDER IT ADVISABLE AT THIS TIME TO SEND SOME HIGH-  
RANKING YEMENI OFFICIAL TO RIYADH TO EXPLAIN TO THE SAUDIS THE  
BACKGROUND OF RECENT MOVES AND TO ELICIT FURTHER SAUDI SUPPORT FOR  
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PAGE 02 SANAA 01026 02 OF 02 301846Z

YARG. SAID SAID HE THOUGHT THIS WAS GOOD IDEA AND WOULD TAKE IT  
BACK TO HAMDI. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, TIMING OF SUCH VISIT WOULD BE  
IMPORTANT LEST IT BE MISINTERPRETED LOCALLY AS SHOWING HAMDI  
WAS EITHER AGENT OR PETITIONER OF SAUDIS, WHICH SAID EMPHASIZED IS  
NOT THE CASE IN EITHER INSTANCE.

5. COMMENT: COMING SO SOON AFTER REMOVAL OF THE ABU LUHUM BROTHERS,  
THIS MOST RECENT ACTION BY HAMDI IS, INDEED, A BOLD MOVE AND DEMON-  
STRATES EVEN MORE DRAMATICALLY HAMDI'S POSITION OF STRENGTH AT THE  
PRESENT TIME. THESE CHANGES HAVE BEEN BRUITED ABOUT IN SANAA FOR THE  
LAST FEW MONTHS AND HAMDI WAS OBVIOUSLY WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNE  
TIME.  
FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL AND AS HAS BEEN REPORTED EARLIER, HAMDI IS  
NOW RIDING THE CREST OF A BROAD SUPPORT AND POPULARITY THROUGHOUT  
YEMEN. AS SAID NOTES, HOWEVER, THE ONLY QUESTION REMAINING IS THE  
REACTION OF AL-AHMAR AND THE CONSERVATIVE SHAIKHS PARTICULARLY IN  
THE NORTH. IF AL-AHMAR DECIDES THAT THE REMOVAL OF ABU SHUWARIB IS

A DIRECT CHALLENGE WHICH MUST BE ANSWERED, WE MAY BE IN FOR SOME TENSE DAYS AHEAD. WHILE I AGREE WITH SAID THAT AL-AHMAR'S MILITARY STRENGTH IS PROBABLY WEAKER THAN HAMDI'S, HE COULD NONETHELESS CAUSE MUCH DAMAGE TO YEMEN'S FRAGILE INTERNAL FABRIC SHOULD HE DECIDE TO WITHDRAW TO HIS NORTHERN TRIBAL REGION AND ENGAGE IN ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. IT APPEARS THAT HAMDI AND THE ARMY COULD STAND UP TO THIS SORT OF TRIBAL UNREST BUT IT WOULD BE AT CONSIDERABLE COST TO YEMEN'S FLEDGLING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE. THE SAUDIS CAN, THEREFORE, CERTAINLY PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE AT THIS TIME BOTH BY CONVINCING AL-AHMAR TO COOPERATE WITH HAMDI AND BY NOT GIVING HIM ANY MORAL OR FINANCIAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO DO OTHERWISE.  
SCOTES

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